

THE SCIENCE OF ETS

CLAIM: DISINTERESTED AND OBJECTIVE MEDICAL AUTHORITIES SUCH AS THE U.S. SURGEON GENERAL HAVE CONCLUDED THAT TOBACCO SMOKE CAUSES DISEASE IN NONSMOKERS.

RESPONSES:

- Many of the scientific weaknesses that antismokers overlook when they make their claims about the nonsmoker's exposure to tobacco smoke are indeed noted in the scientific portion of the U.S. Surgeon General's Report on ETS.(1) Unfortunately, those points were omitted from the executive summary and press materials that accompanied the report when it was released. When one thinks about it, however, such omissions are not terribly surprising -- former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, who released the report, had openly avowed his goal of moving the United States toward a "smoke-free" society by the year 2000.(2)
- Whatever one's views about smoking, one has to question whether the means former Surgeon General Koop apparently adopted to reach his goal of a "smoke-free" society--scientifically unproven claims about the disease risks of tobacco smoke in the air -- are appropriate. Certainly, one has to be concerned about the potential

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long-term effects of such an approach. What about the impact on the credibility of science? The distortion of public policies concerning indoor air? The loss of personal freedom? While the former Surgeon General chose to ignore those questions and issues in a headlong rush toward a "smoke-free" society, society itself cannot afford to do the same.

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PUBLIC SMOKING - HEALTH - AUTHORITIES

REFERENCES

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service Centers for Disease Control, The Health Consequences of Involuntary Smoking. A Report of the Surgeon General: 1986, DHHS Publication No. (CDC) 87-8398, Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986.
2. Koop, C. E., "A Smoke-Free Society by the Year 2000," New York State Journal of Medicine, 290-292, July, 1985.

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